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"I do not think so, for what I am telling you the men of Vao said long before the white men came."

In later passages he quotes one of the natives as saying: "We do not know whether he begets white men, since our ancestors, not having seen them, never spoke of them. When we say that he begets all men, we think chiefly of those who inhabit the big islands that we can see: Santo, Oba, Pentecost [Raga], Ambrim, Pama, Epi, and our own big island of Malekula."

"Then so long as the moon shines there will always be men on Vao?"

"Yes, there is no doubt of that."

"Why are you all so uneasy and so melancholy when the moon is dark?" [1]

"That is because we ask ourselves, 'Will the moon come back?' If she did not come back it would mean that she must doubtless have fallen into the pit (behind the horizon there is a deep chasm), and in that case, when we died, there would not be any more Vao men to take our place."

"Is that why you are so joyful when you see her appear again, and that you then cry '*Selo! Selo!*'?"

"Yes, for that means that Ta-ghar is lighting her up again and that the two together will go on giving us children."

"So that is why the little children beckon to her and call her *le-le! le-le!* grandmother?"

"Yes, that is so."

Later, he again quotes a native as having said: "Ta-ghar is the father of light; he lights up the moon which he inhabits."

Godefroy sums up this aspect of Ta-ghar thus: "Seeing the image of Ta-ghar appearing on the moon's disc every time that she is full, they infer that Ta-ghar is there up above, occupied with the everlasting renewal of the race."

Associated belief that Ta-ghar is connected with the sun. Ta-ghar as "source of light."

Closely associated with the belief that Ta-ghar lives in and at the same time lights up the moon is the feeling that, as the source of light, he is also connected with the sun. Thus Godefroy recounts how "more than once, while mixing with them when they were at work, I have heard them speak to this effect: 'Yesterday, the clouds plunged us in darkness, but today Ta-ghar gives us light, Ta-ghar shines. Ta-ghar loves us, for *his* sun makes our food to grow (in our gardens). When Ta-ghar is with us (that is to say, when the sun shines) all the world is in light, and it is good; with Ta-ghar it is light, with Le-hev-hev it is the blackest night.' After two or three days' rain it is not rare to hear them radiantly cry,

[1] I.e. from the last quarter till the day after New Moon.

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'*Ta-ghar mo har kele* (Ta-ghar shines again).'" Such phrases led him to "think sometimes that they [the natives] confused him [Ta-ghar] with the sun itself." [1] But, he says, "When I questioned them about this, they invariably replied 'No.'" He adds: "It is therefore permissible to conclude . . . that the conception of Ta-ghar and the conception of light are inseparable one from the other, and even that Ta-ghar is the author of light." This supposition, and the identification of Ta-ghar with light in any form, would appear at first sight to receive support from the statement, also made by Melteg-lil-nale, that the reason why the natives speak of the island of Oba as "the land of Ta-ghar" is that this island "lies in the direction from which the sun rises." This, however, is immediately dispelled by the same man's next statement: "The sun lights up the earth *just as* [my italics] Ta-ghar lights up the moon." This shows quite definitely that Ta-ghar is associated primarily with the moon, and only through analogy with the sun.

Alleged sky-world not primarily connected with Ta-ghar, but with the idea of "height" associated with the Maki.

Godefroy speaks also of the conception of a sky-world called *bakeran*. Wishing to demonstrate the evolution of moral ideas in accordance with Catholic missionary thought, and struck by certain analogies, on the one hand between Ta-ghar and the Christian conception of God, and on the other between Le-hev-hev and Satan, it was but natural that he should hope to extend the analogy by comparing *bakeran* with heaven. It is therefore worth while, in face of a conception equally vague both in Christian and in Malekulan theology, to see what he made of the comparison. His first mention of it occurs almost at the outset of his enquiry about Ta-ghar. Following on Melteg-lil-nale's statement, already quoted, to the effect that Ta-ghar was "very different from Le-hev-hev," he brought the subject back to Ta-ghar, asking:

"Where does he walk? Where is he? In the sky?" [2]

"No, he is not in the sky."

"But you say that he is up above."

"It's true he's up above."

"Well, up above, that is the sky-world."

"I don't know" [Typical answer of the native who feels himself being forced into a position he does not understand].

[1] Godefroy goes so far as to associate the word *Ta-ghar*, "which they pronounce with a very soft *g*, half-way between *g* and *h*" (i.e. the Melanesian *gh*), and which, as he points out, is in Atchin actually pronounced Ta-har, with the verb *har*, "to light up, or shine," and thereby concludes that the names themselves mean "source of light," or "that which lights."

[2] The French word *ciel* means, of course, in everyday language both "sky" and "heaven," and in an ethnological sense "sky-world." In the following translation I use all three expressions, as the sense demands.

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"What do you mean, you don't know? . . . Where, then, is the sky-world?"

"We do not know."

"All the same, you often talk about your heaven, your *bakeran*?"

"That's true, but we don't know where it is."

"But, look, if Ta-ghar is up above, as you say he is, what place does he live in?"

The reply was, "He lives in the moon," and from there on the dialogue continued as already cited.

For the ethnologist and for the general reader the important point resulting from this dialogue is that, try as he would, the questioner was unable to establish any relationship between Ta-ghar and the sky-world apart from the fact that he inhabits the moon. This he later reaffirms, saying: "though they recognise the specialised occupation of Ta-ghar during a certain period of the lunar cycle, yet they do not know where he lives." In spite of this, however, he returns to his original thesis, or rather hope, by continuing: "strangely enough, they still remember the name *of his kingdom* [my italics], the sky; the *bakeran*, of which they often speak." This subjective lapse on the part of the reverend father is excusable only in so far as it is the only one of its kind to which, in an otherwise admirably objective account, he has succumbed. His next sentence gives us the clue to which system of native thought the conception of a so-called sky-world belongs. "During the interminable Maki rites they perform a dance which takes them to *bakeran*." This dance is possibly one of the labyrinth dances called *na-leng*, to which reference will be made later.[1] The statement makes it quite clear that the conception of *bakeran* is closely connected with the Maki, with which Ta-ghar has nothing whatever to do. The questioner's preoccupation with the conception of heaven, or the sky-world, as a place, and the natives' resistance to this idea, is shown by the statement with which he winds up his enquiry: "When one asks them, 'What is your *bakeran*, where is it?' they reply, 'We don't know; our ancestors did not tell us.' Nevertheless they have the notion that it is up above rather than down below, and that it consists of something beautiful and good." Though this last phrase would appear to smack of Christian dogma, it does, in fact, represent, but only in attenuated form, the native conception, which is not one of any place at all, but simply one of great and glorious height, typified, as we shall see when we come to discuss this rite, with the hawk's soaring upward flight.

The corresponding word *bageran*[2] in Atchin means "cumulus cloud," and was adopted by a native of my acquaintance as a "high" Maki title, in common with numerous similar titles indicating physical, social or moral "height." These will be discussed later when dealing with the

[1] See pp. 336 ff.

[2] The final syllable of this word may be connected with *ran* meaning "dawn."

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Maki, when it will become evident that the idea of a sky-world as a place is in fact foreign to the native mind, which is occupied not with locality but with the conception of pure height as symbolical of that upward striving which is the essence of one aspect of that rite.[1]

The whole subject of a supposed sky-world has been raised here only as an indication of the danger of false association when possessed by an *idée fixe*, and to demonstrate the fact that Ta-ghar, though closely connected with the moon and secondarily with the sun, has no other connexion whatever with the sky.

As luminary, however, but only as such, Ta-ghar is also vaguely connected with the stars.

Ta-ghar not worshipped.

Godefroy sums up his cosmological attributes with the words: "Ta-ghar begets men by the moon: in that he demonstrates his power; Ta-ghar has ordained the earth, the sea, the stars, the light, the clouds, all for the greatest good of man, and thereby man recognises his goodness." There is no formal ritual connected with him, nor any act of worship. He has no influence over the weather, and is never supplicated.

He finds himself, however, again frustrated in his search for any kind of reciprocal action towards Ta-ghar on the part of men.

"And this Ta-ghar, who is so good to you, who begets you by the moon and who is therefore your father, who provides food for you every day and has ordered all things for you, how do you think of him? Do you love him? Do you honour him?"

"We know him well; but we do nothing for him. He never does us any harm, so we take care to leave him alone."

Godefroy adds:

"Ta-ghar is good . . . but this does not imply that the natives are in any way grateful to him, nor yet demand favours from him; their attitude is to show no interest in him, but to leave him alone."

This is indeed the case. In all the Small Islands I know of no formal ritual or act of worship connected with Ta-ghar. Nor have I met with any signs of gratitude nor of any other kind of emotion towards him other than one of simple acceptance of the fact that he exists. It is necessary here to point out that, though Melteg-lil-nale said that Ta-ghar was like a ghost (*ta-mat*), he very pointedly did not say he was one. The use of the word *ta-mat* was no more than a manner of speech intended to convey to an outsider the fact that, though not indeed a ghost, he was like a ghost in that he had no body. It is an essential part of the attitude towards ghosts (i.e. ancestors) that they are at once venerated and feared, and that their good or evil moods importantly affect the well-being of their descendants. But Ta-ghar is always good, nor does he ever change, nor

[1] See p. 732.

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could he—a thing that never enters the native mind—be affected by supplication or coercion. Thus, though his light (of the moon, or sun) is greeted with joy when it appears, he is in no way responsible for climatic or meteorological vagaries. The natives "affirm that Ta-ghar, with his clouds and winds, has no power to cause rain to fall." [1] For this, or even to make the sun shine, it is necessary to resort to magic, which operates only through the assistance of a continuous line of previous, now dead, practitioners.

Thus Ta-ghar is never appealed to, nor are there any rites connected with him, but he is simply there.

Ta-ghar pleads with Le-hev-hev to let the ghosts of the dead pass into the land of the dead.

The only action, apart from just existing, and of begetting children by the moon, which he is reported ever to take is when, under the specialised name Ta-ghar Lawo, he intercedes with the Guardian Ghost Le-hev-hev in order that this Being may let the ghost of a dead man proceed on his way to the land of the dead; for which favour the new ghost makes him a present of a pig, the ghost of one killed during his mortuary rites. This incident will be described in the next section.[2]

Summary of Characteristics

To sum up, Ta-ghar appears in two aspects:

(*a*) As a mythical hero arriving in a canoe, whence he distributes food-stuffs and pigs, together with instructions how to rear them, and then sails away, betraying distinctly human feelings by accepting the companionship of a woman. The islands of Maewo, Oba and Raga are regarded as his home, and youths from all the Small Islands perform a pilgrimage to one or other of them for the sake of being initiated into the mysteries of sex.

(*b*) As a deity with the following attributes:

(i) Is creator of all men and things.
(ii) Lives in the moon, where his image may be recognised in the dark marks we call "the man in the moon."
(iii) Lights up the moon.
(iv) Begets all human children by the moon, which is called "grandmother," whence, when ready, the children fall into their mothers' wombs, which are the portal through which they come to the light of day.

[1] But see p. 634.

[2] See below, p. 227.

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craft is steered by means of a long paddle (Fig. 55) held by the steersman on the port side to counteract the dragging effect of the outrigger float.

Fig. 55
Steering-paddle of a sea-going canoe (*nu-wak wala*).

Navigation by night.

Sea-going canoes furnished with sails were capable of long voyages by night as well as by day, navigation by night being assisted by considerable knowledge of the apparent movement of the stars. An account of a night voyage undertaken by the author with the natives of Atchin, together with some of the natives' astronomical observations, will be given in a later volume.

Canoes named after trees used in their construction.

Sea-going canoes may be made from the trunks of various trees, those I recorded being *tawò*, *nev*, *bagure* and *na-tor*.

Each individual canoe is named. The following list of canoe names in the order in which they were constructed shows that it is to the trees from which they were made that the name chiefly refers. These names are:

Vile	*Tawò borav(u)*
Tawò iwagh	*Tawò veturah*
Na-tor	*Vile*
Vile	*Na-tor*
Tawò mel	

Vile is presumably another tree from which canoes are made.[1]

Ownership.

If, when a sea-going canoe is to be made, a Maki is in progress, the canoe then belongs exclusively to the officiating "line" of Maki-men, that is to say, to the officiating matrilineal moiety within the double-village.[2] In this case, it will be the members of the introducing "line"

[1] Compare p. 79 for two Raga canoes made respectively from trees called *pego* (bread-fruit tree) and *nev*. A similar practice of naming canoes after the trees used in their construction is recorded also by Rivers (1, vol. I, p. 171) from Mota and Merlav. One of the trees so used is *tora*, corresponding to the Vao *na-tor*.

On the adoption of whalers in place of sea-going canoes this type of naming after trees could not be continued. Names given by the natives to their whalers, as recorded by Godefroy, are "New Year" (pronounced *niouyet*), the boat having been bought close to New Year's Day, "Comet," after Halley's comet which was clearly visible in the islands, "Queen," and "Saint-Michel."

[2] Compare Rivers's statement (1, vol. I, 209) that in North Raga "canoes are in no case individual property even now, but belong always to the *verana* as a whole," the *verana* being described as 'the subdivision of the [matrilineal] moiety the exact nature of which is uncertain,' but here appears to correspond with the Vao 'line.' In the same way, in Mota and Merlav the members of a crew are confined to a single matrilineal moiety (Rivers, 1, vol. I, p. 172).